

CHAPTER FIVE

KNOW THY FOOD

TWO WEEKS OF TRACKING,
BECAUSE YOU'RE WORTH IT

Sample Foodist's Journal

Monday

- 11:00 A.M.** ½ c. muesli w/ hemp milk, cinnamon
- 12:30 P.M.** Iced coffee, no cream
- 4:00 P.M.** Workout
- 5:00 P.M.** Starving! Spinach feta Peasant Pie
- 8:00 P.M.** Dinner at Dosa: split Chennai chicken (w/ salad), dahi puri, and lamb curry w/ lemon rice with Kevin
- Evening:** 2 glasses white wine

Total steps: 15K

Comments: Late start was a killer, threw off my whole day

Tuesday

- 8:30 A.M.** ½ c. warm muesli, Americano w/ splash of cream
- 1:00 P.M.** 2 scrambled eggs in butter, ½ c. kimchi
- 4:00 P.M.** Workout
- 5:30 P.M.** Coconut: water and flesh
- 7:30 P.M.** Lacinato kale (1 bunch), 4 oz. tempeh, sautéed w/ soy sauce and garlic; 1 very small avocado

Total steps: 14K

Comments: Dinner was good, but a little too big; felt much better today than yesterday

Wednesday

- 8:30 A.M.** ½ c. warm muesli, Americano w/ splash of cream
- 11:45 A.M.** Lunch at Plow: roasted kabocha squash salad, arugula, hazelnuts, vinaigrette, asiago; 1 bite of Kevin's egg scramble (tomatoes, spinach, feta); herbal iced tea
- 2:00 P.M.** Workout
- 4:00 P.M.** Early Girl tomato
- 5:30 P.M.** 1½ c. homemade popcorn w/ butter, salt
- 6:30 P.M.** Roasted chicken leg, 5 very small potatoes, mixed green salad w/ tomato, carrot, radish, basil, vinaigrette

Total steps: 13K

Thursday

- 9:00 A.M.** Workout
- 11:00 A.M.** Muesli, coffee per usual
- 3:30 P.M.** ½ leftover chicken breast, 4 small potatoes, 2 Early Girl tomatoes
- 6:30 P.M.** Got roped into 5-course pasta-tasting menu (required whole-table participation); hardly any veggies; hard to track portions, but tried not to get full; had a few dessert bites; wine pairings, about 2½ glasses total

Total steps: 12.5K

Comments: Dinner not that good; felt like a waste of an indulgence

Friday

- 7:30 A.M.** Warm muesli, coffee w/ cream
- 11:30 A.M.** Workout
- 1:00 P.M.** Half chicken breast plus wing, 2 very small potatoes, mixed green salad w/ carrot, radish, tomato
- 7:00 P.M.** Sautéed tempeh and radishes, tossed w/ radish greens and avocado, oil, vinegar

Total steps: 11K

Comments: Good day

Saturday

- 11:00 A.M.** Coffee w/ cream
- 12:30 P.M.** Fresh English muffin, butter, poached farm egg, smoked salmon, dry-farmed tomato slices, arugula (homemade w/ farmers market ingredients—epic)
- 12:45 P.M.** Roseblush apple
- 3:00 P.M.** Workout
- 5:00 P.M.** ¼ c. trail mix
- 8:00 P.M.** At party: 2 slices roast beef, 2 (duck?) lettuce cups (mostly veggies), assorted cold vegetables, 3 whiskey punch cocktails; dessert: many raspberries, a few strawberries, 4–5 chocolate bites

Total steps: 13K

Comments: Should have eaten more dinner food, less sugar

Sunday

10:00 A.M. 2 cappuccino

11:00 A.M. 2 scrambled eggs w/ scallion (cooked in butter),
1 Arkansas Black apple

1:30 P.M. Organic chicken fajitas, fresh guacamole, tortilla chips
(1 c. chips)

6:00 P.M. 1 c. homemade roasted tomato and pepper soup w/
horseradish/chive crème fraîche, pan-roasted brussels
sprouts w/ pine nuts, cannellini beans w/ butter, olive
oil, parsley, 1 Italian sausage (Whole Foods), 1 glass
red wine

Total steps: 10K

Comments: Felt like too much food today. Full.

How to Make Your Own Muesli— It's Stupid Easy

Muesli is my favorite alternative to traditional breakfast cereal. It's minimally processed, has no added sugar, and when made properly is quite tasty. The only problem is that these are features that food companies hate, because foods that have them are not big sellers. This makes it difficult to find muesli, particularly a high-quality version at a reasonable price.

Luckily, it's stupid easy to make your own muesli. Doing it yourself is also a lot cheaper and lets you customize the mix to your preferences. All you need is some rolled grains (oats or mixed grains work fine) and an assortment of nuts and dried fruits of your choosing—you don't even need a real recipe.

For my personal recipe I use a five-grain cereal that I found at my local market (about \$2). I add some roasted and lightly salted mixed nuts, some extra hazelnuts (because I love them), some golden raisins, and some dried currants (about \$4 total). It tastes amazing, even better than the expensive stuff I used to buy, and lasts much longer.

I sometimes eat my muesli mixed with a little plain yogurt, but these days I prefer to just pour half a cup of it into a bowl (I leave a measuring cup in the container as a scooper), add some water, and microwave it for 2 minutes. It comes out like the tastiest oatmeal you've ever had. I sprinkle a hefty dose of cinnamon on top and maybe add a splash of unsweetened hemp or almond milk, and it tastes delicious. If you're still acclimating to the lack of sugar in muesli, you can try stirring in a spoonful of peanut butter, low-sugar jam, or honey.

Finding the Courage to Roast a Chicken

I wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard a foodie proclaim that roasting a chicken is the easiest thing in the world and the perfect place for new cooks to start. Please. I can think of at least a hundred things easier to cook than roast chicken, with salad being the undisputed champion (and scrambled eggs the runner-up).

Buying and cooking a whole chicken requires a number of steps that can make a new cook uncomfortable. First you have to know where to get the chicken—and if you want a pastured, antibiotic-free bird (as you should), this isn't always straightforward. To make the purchase you must also be comfortable talking to the butcher, even though there's a good chance you have no idea what you're talking about. You have to be willing and able to deal with raw meat, which makes many people queasy in and of itself. Cooking meat also requires special equipment, such as a meat thermometer and a roasting pan, which newbies might not have access to. So, no, roasting chicken is not the easiest thing on earth. But if you can get over all those things, it really isn't that hard either.

I had a zillion excuses for why it took me so long to roast my first chicken. I think the main one was that a whole chicken just sounds so big, like too much work and too much food. But I was inspired by Ruth Reichl's recipe in her book *Garlic and Sapphires*,² so I finally built up the courage to make it happen.

I'm happy to report that I now roast chickens regularly and finally consider them one of the easier dishes in my repertoire. The difference in flavor between a real farm-fresh chicken and the massive "boneless skinless" breasts I grew up eating is truly phenomenal. That alone is reason enough to try the recipe in my opinion.

Here's the slightly easier version of Reichl's recipe I've adapted.

Simple Roast Chicken

1 3- to 4-pound roasting chicken

Chopped fresh herbs

1 to 2 tablespoons butter (optional)

1 lemon (optional)

Salt and pepper

Olive oil

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Remove the bag of innards from inside the cavity if necessary. Rinse the bird with cold water and pat dry with paper towels. Place the chicken, breast side up, in a 9 × 13-inch roasting pan (one with at least 2-inch sides). Remove the excess fat from near the tail and put it under the skin of the breast meat (or use a couple of pats of butter if there isn't enough fat). Season the meat by placing fresh chopped herbs like rosemary or chives under the breast skin with the fat or butter. Put a fork-punctured lemon into the cavity (optional, but recommended). Coat the skin with salt, pepper, and olive oil, and bake for 1 hour or until the temperature reaches 165° in the thigh meat (away from the bone).

Sure it's simple, but I know I'm not the only one intimidated by the idea of buying and cooking an entire chicken.

10 Simple Goals to Get You Started Eating Healthy

1. Eat breakfast

Eating a healthy breakfast is one of the easiest ways to improve your healthstyle. Breakfast is quick and easy to make, and even healthy ones taste great. Start here to automatically improve 30 percent of your daily meals.

2. Buy groceries weekly

Shopping is an essential habit for the obvious reason that to eat better, you need to have better food in your house. Get yourself on a regular, practical shopping schedule, and don't be lazy about it. Use all that willpower you saved up by ditching diets and build a healthy shopping habit.

3. Eat something green at lunch and dinner

This is one of those simple, easy-to-implement changes that gets you in the habit of making healthier choices on a regular basis. You don't need to go all in on salad every time, just try to include something green, even if it's a small side dish. Train yourself to eat those veggies.

4. Eat fish three times a week

Fish is especially healthy, and getting in the practice of having it several times a week is a great habit to develop. When possible, use fish to replace less healthy foods, like processed meats.

5. Limit added sugar to once a week

It's smart to start recognizing foods with added sugar for what they are: dessert. If you're currently eating a lot of sugary foods, start by cutting back gradually, working your way down over time. The important step is that you learn to keep track of how often you eat dessert each week and keep the number in a range that optimizes your health and happiness.

6. Try a new type of vegetable every week

In the foodist spirit of adventure and in the name of nutrient diversity, getting in the habit of trying new vegetables is an excellent way to keep your healthstyle exciting. There's no need to go nuts with this, but trying a new fruit or vegetable every week or so is a great way to develop your foodist palate, particularly if your current diet is limited to a handful of common items.

7. Bring your lunch to work

This isn't going to be feasible for everyone, but if you can swing bringing your lunch to work, even for a few days a week, it can have a tremendous impact on your health and body weight.

8. Cook dinner at home on weekdays

Even I can't bring myself to cook at home every night, but I make an effort to do it every Sunday through Thursday. The more I succeed, the easier it is to control my weight.

9. Carry a water bottle

I drink so much water that it makes me uncomfortable to go out for more than a couple of hours without bringing my own bottle with me. Thirst is often mistaken for hunger, and staying hydrated is an effective way to dampen unconscious eating habits.

10. Embrace NEAT

Most people think of treadmills and dumbbells when they think of exercise, but simply moving more throughout the course of the day (also known as nonexercise activity thermogenesis, or NEAT) can burn more calories than a daily gym trip. To keep tabs on your activity levels, invest in a pedometer or activity tracker,* and make sure you meet your daily goal.

* The Fitbit and the Nike+ FuelBand work well.